



CSAF Professional Reading Program

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LAST SUMMER at my request, the Air Force History Support Office (AFHSO) began developing a professional reading program for Air Force officers, enlisted members, and civilians. The objective was to broaden understanding of air and space power and to examine how they should be employed in independent, joint, and coalition operations. Why? Because it's vitally important that our people understand the totality of what we are about as the nation's full-service air and space force, if we are to provide the capabilities America will require to meet the security challenges of the twenty-first century.

In the post-cold-war era of fast-rising regional crises that demand a prompt and exacting response, the unique characteristics of air and space power—speed, range, flexibility, precision, and global perspective—provide our air and space forces unparalleled access

to 100 percent of the earth's population, every center of government, and any trouble spot on the face of the earth. Our demonstrated ability to capitalize on this "global engagement" capability to achieve US objectives has resulted in national leaders and theater commanders turning to the Air Force as the first weapon of choice when a crisis or contingency unfolds.

The CSAF Professional Reading Program complements initiatives that came out of our long-range planning effort to foster the growth of a unifying air and space culture throughout our service. Together, they will help produce knowledgeable service members who more effectively can employ air and space forces in independent, joint, or coalition operations. When these Air Force operators serve in joint billets, they will be able to advise their superiors on the Joint Staff, in unified command headquarters, in the Department of Defense, and in other agencies on how best to employ air and space power to achieve US security objectives. Ultimately, our initiatives will help prepare current and future Air Force leaders to deal effectively with the challenges they surely will face in a post-cold-war world of austere defense budgets, diverse regional threats, and continued high-operations tempo for our units.

With all this in mind, I asked AFHSO to help me develop an appropriate professional reading program for our people. We decided to break the program into three portions—officer, enlisted, and civilian—to make it more manageable. And we agreed to focus initially on the officer portion since it would likely be the most difficult to bring on-line.

After several months of preparation and staff work, we have implemented the officer portion of the professional reading program. AFHSO is currently working with the chief master sergeant of the Air Force to develop a comparable program for the enlisted force. Once the enlisted portion is under way, we will work the civilian piece.

The officer portion of the CSAF Professional Reading Program is founded on a wide-ranging professional reading list based on inputs from Air University, the Air Force Academy, AFHSO, individual historians, and other interested agencies. The list includes works on the history of strategy and warfare, air and space doctrine, air operations, and personal experiences of early aviation leaders. In the end, this is my personal list.

I have asked that it be broken into three levels that correlate to the progressive stages of an officer's professional development. Thus, it includes a basic list for captains, an intermediate list for majors and lieutenant colonels, and an advanced list for colonels and general officers. Each list also includes *Airpower Journal* as the Air Force's premier professional publication.

Combined, these sublists constitute a core list that all Air Force officers should read as part of an ongoing personal-development program. The books were chosen to be interesting, informative, and thought provoking. However, selection of individual books does not reflect the Air Force's endorsement of any particular authors, their views, or their actions. In fact, some of the selections may provide the basis for case studies designed to teach the challenges of command and the different ways that people perform.

Many other good books are out there—some still being written—on subject areas covered by the officer reading list: leadership, the history of air and space power, military strategy, Air Force doctrine, joint and coalition operations, and combat in the twentieth century. So, from time to time, we will issue supplemental reading lists on specific topics to assist people who want to read further in a particular area of interest.

A unique aspect of the CSAF Professional Reading Program for officers is that the Air Force is procuring all the books on the basic list for new captains. This initiative provides institutional recognition of the impor-

tance of officers being selected for promotion to captain. As of 1 March, newly promoted captains are receiving all the books on the basic list, free of charge, in a mailing that includes letters from the chief of staff and the Air University (AU) commander. These letters emphasize the personal and professional benefits of pursuing the professional reading program. The AU commander's letter also encourages our new captains to read selections from the list to help them prepare for Squadron Officer School (SOS). Then, while attending SOS, they will have the opportunity to discuss and report on selections from the list.

This aspect of the CSAF Professional Reading Program supports the current career-development pattern that encourages our young officers to focus on their functional specialties during their first years of active duty. Once they make captain, though, they should begin to broaden their understanding of their profession. We will encourage our young officers to begin a career-long reading program by providing them the basic list of books that not only will help educate them, but also will capture their imagination and interest them in professional readings. On the other hand, we anticipate that field grade and senior officers will purchase their respective reading lists as part of an ongoing personal professional reading program.

All of the books on the professional reading list for officers are in print and are being made available this spring for purchase at AAFES facilities and for checkout at base libraries. These outlets also will help promote the CSAF Professional Reading Program on our installations. An intensive and recurring promotional effort will highlight the reading program to our officers through Air Force News Service releases; articles in *Air Force Times*, *Airman* magazine, and *Air Force Magazine*; and reports on Air Force TV News. Also *Airpower Journal* will publish bibliographical essays on the basic, intermediate, and advanced lists in future issues.

In order to ensure that we reap the full benefits of this professional reading program, I've asked all commanders and supervisors to make the officer reading list an integral part of their mentoring and professional development programs. This will help drive home the importance of professional reading, get our people into the books, and provide useful material for group discussions as well as encourage individual preparation for in-residence professional military education.

Commanders and supervisors have the inherent responsibility of promoting the professional development of subordinates. I am convinced that the CSAF Professional Reading Program will serve as a useful instrument in carrying out this vitally important responsibility. In the end, it is crucial to the future of the Air Force that we prepare our officers to be members of the profession of arms, with particular expertise as advocates and leaders of air and space power. By doing so, we will help ensure that our service remains the world's most respected air and space force in the twenty-first century—a period that will surely go down in history as the age of air and space power. □

